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The Relationship of Academic Dishonesty and Procedural Justice among University Students in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study investigate the relationship between students' perception of procedural justice and academic dishonesty among students at a Thai university. A cross-sectional survey design was employed that utilized a correlational analysis. The sample size derived from the university consisted of 133 respondents. Results indicated that there were no difference in the students' perception between procedural justice and academic dishonesty when compared by gender, program, class, or faculty. A weak positive relationship was found between students' perception of procedural justice and academic dishonesty ($n = 133$, $r=.27$). Implications for this are discussed within the article.

Keywords: Academic Dishonesty, Procedural Justice, Thailand.

INTRODUCTION

Within Thailand there are concerns with academic dishonesty. Among medical students in Thailand, it was found that approximately 60% of them admitted to cheating even though the knew that doing so was wrong (Tanawattanacharoen & Nimnuan, 2009). In addition, there have been several test taking scandals. One involved the use of anti-cheating hats at an univeristy, in which a photo was posted online leading to embarrassment for the univeristy (Neuman, 2013). The second involve test-takers attempting an entrance exam for medical school using smart-watches to receive answers from outside the building. The perpetrators stated that they agreed to pay over \$20,000 if they passed the exam (Mala, 2016).

Several theories have been proposed to explain this behavior. Komin (1991), suggest that Thais are indifferent to academics as this is not usually valued. Young (2013) states that Thai students fun-loving and easygoing attitude contribute to academic dishonesty as there is a focus on the present and not on long-term consequences.

However, one potential motivating factor for academic dishonesty that neither Komin (1991) or Young (2013) mention is the idea of justice. In the West, it has been found that if students perceive that the teacher or exam/assignment is unfair they may resort to academic

dishonesty to level the playing field (Lemons & Seaton, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that this hypothesis holds in the context of Thailand as well.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice among university students in Thailand. Assessing this relationship will benefit teachers and administrators as it may point to a potential problem in the learning and teaching environment. Doing so may help students to avoid the pitfall of dishonest academic behaviors.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is defined as any duplicitous action by a student to give them an unwarranted advantage during the completion of an assignment or assessment (Bleeker, 2008). Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to such action as cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and providing false information (Mala, 2016; Smith, 2012).

Academic performance has been found to be a major factor contributing to academic dishonesty (Miller, Murdock, & Grotewiel, 2017). Students who are ill-prepared but need better performance may resort to questionable practices in order to do better (Balbuena & Lamela, 2015). The educational goals of the students can also make a difference. For example, social science majors tend to commit academic dishonesty less often than students who are majoring in one of the hard sciences (Sendag, Duran, & Fraser, 2012).

A common factor in academic dishonesty is an ignorance of what it is. It is common for students to avoid responsibility and claim that they were unaware that what they did constituted academic dishonesty (Beasley, 2014). However, there may be some truth to the students' denial as one other study has found that knowledge of academic dishonesty is low among students (Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif, 2012). Furthermore, students who are educated on the nuances of academic dishonesty are less likely to commit offenses and more likely to behave in an ethical manner (Henning et al., 2015).

There are also differences by gender when examining academic dishonesty. Female students tend to have a less accepting attitude towards academic dishonesty compared to men (D Thomas, 2017). Furthermore, men have higher rates of plagiarism when compared to women (Olafson, Schraw, Nedelson, Nedelson, & Kehrwald, 2013). However, when women are caught committing academic dishonesty are more likely to deny the behavior when compared to men (Witmer & Johansson, 2015).

In terms of Asia, there are differences in how people from the East and West view academic dishonesty. For example, East and West students view copying, collusion, and plagiarism differently (Ehrich, Howard, Mu, & Bokosmaty, 2014; Henning et al., 2015). In addition, international students are more likely to be reported for cheating than local students (Beasley, 2014). In China, several studies have found serious incidences of plagiarism involving not only students but also lecturers who were looking for illicit ways to publish academic articles (Jacobs, 2010; Xueqin, 2010).

In Thailand, studies involving academic dishonesty among medical students, undergraduate students, and even for entrance exams have been discussed (Mala, 2016; Neuman, 2013; Tanawattanacharoen & Nimnuan, 2009). Thomas (2017) examined the role of achievement emotions with academic dishonesty and found a weak negative relationship indicating that a desire for achievement is not linked with dishonest academic behavior. Lastly, a separate study in Thailand found that individualism, mindset, and motivation explain perceptions of academic dishonesty among university students (D Thomas, 2017).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice is defined as the concept of fairness in determining how rewards are distributed and disagreements are settled among individuals (Landy & Conte, 2010). Most students believe that teachers should treat students fairly (Tarhan, 2018). However, at the university level, students often have concerns with procedural justice indicating that they think that teachers are unfair at times (Horan, Chory, & Goodboy, 2010).

An association has been found between procedural justice and academic achievement. One study found that transparency in the sharing of information affected students' perception of justice and their academic performance (Kazemi, 2016). A separate study also found a significant relationship between perceptions of justice and university grades (Kovačević, Zunić, & Mihailović, 2013).

The behavior and personality of the teacher can play a role in perceptions of procedural justice. Teachers who are consistent in their treatment of students, even if that treatment is negative, will be perceived as fairer than teachers with more erratic behavior (Gouveia-Pereira, Vala, & Correia, 2017). This perception of fairness is often more important to the students than actually learning, indicating that relationships are usually more important than content mastery (Resh & Sabbagh, 2014).

Within the context of Asian and Thailand, studies involving procedural justice have focused on the employee relations sector rather than on education. For example, in Japan, it was found that there was a negative association between procedural justice and stress among female employees (Inoue, Kawakami, Eguchi, Miyaki, & Tsutsumi, 2015). Another study in South Korea found a positive correlation between procedural justice and organizational commitment (Woo, Maguire, & Gau, 2018). In Thailand, procedural justice has been linked with work motivation, perceived organizational support, organizational citizenship behavior, and commitment (Kasemsap, 2012; Panpluem & Jetsadaluck, 2017). However, there potentially no extant studies that examines procedural justice in the context of higher education in Thailand.

1. What are the student's perceptions about procedural justice and academic dishonesty?
2. Is there a difference in the students' perceptions of procedural justice or academic dishonesty gender, class, major, and program?
3. What is the relationship between procedural justice and academic dishonesty among university students?

METHODS

Research Design

The design in this study is used a cross-sectional survey and correlation design with 47 items that would be used to assess the perception from all the participants toward their perception on procedural justice and academic dishonesty. This survey also requires the participants to identify some demographic information including gender and years in program.

Sample

The participants of this study were university students local at one institution in Thailand. Non-Random Convenience Sampling was employed. The study had a sample size of 133 participants. Of all the participants, 26%, were Freshman, 27% were Sophomore, 32% were Junior, 9% were Senior and 5% were ESL Students. For gender, 52% of the participants were male and 48% were female. The majority of the participants were English majors at 36% then Education majors at 20% followed by Business, Science, Religion, and Technology at 14%, 11%, 8% and 4% respectively. For program, 79% were in the international program and 21% were in the Thai program.

Data Collection Instruments

The questionnaire in this study had two sections. Section one contained biographical information of the respondents such as gender (male or female), program (Thai or International), class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or ESL), and faculty (arts and humanities, business administration, education and psychology, nursing, religious studies, and science). Section two consisted of 44 statements that measured perceptions of academic dishonesty and procedural justice utilizing a 4-point Likert scale.

Academic Dishonesty Scale

Academic dishonesty scale was adopted from Craig and Dalton (2014). This scale measured participants' perceptions of academic dishonesty/seriousness of 8 common academics 'offense'. The participants were asked how often they have engaged in academic dishonesty and how frequently do they believe that academic dishonesty occurs. The alpha Cronbach for this 35-item scale was 0.92

Procedural Justice Scale

The procedural justice scale was adopted from Brasher, Brooks and Boles (2004). This scale measured students' perception of procedural justice in terms of the fairness of policies in classroom. Concepts covered include how the teacher administers policies fairly and the quality of treatment of students. The alpha Cronbach for the 9-item scale was 0.90.

Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher distributed the survey to students who agreed to participate in the study. Respondents will be assured that the information will be kept confidential. Finally, the respondents will submit the instrument back to the researcher for further process.

Data Analysis

Means and standard deviation were calculated from the individuals items and the primary variables of academic dishonesty and procedural justice. T-test/ANOVA was used to analyze the difference of students' perception by various demographic groups. Lastly, to analyze the relationship between procedural justice and academic dishonesty, correlational analysis was conducted.

RESULTS

From the descriptive statistics on the perception of students toward academic dishonesty, the result from the study shown that the overall perception of the participants regarding academic dishonesty indicated disagreement in terms of their view of the items of the scale ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.47$). For example, The respondent agreed with the statement “do[ing] homework for [my] friends is not something very serious ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.02$). Respondents also were neutral towards the statement that “it is not very serious if I copy a homework or assignment from my friends” ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.90$). Similar respondents were also neutral towards the statement that said that “[I] think that it is not very serious to ask [my] friends to do [my] homework for [me] ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.02$). However, respondents indicated that they rarely or never pay someone to do homework for them ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 0.76$).

In relation to procedural justice, the overall overview of the students’ perception are neutral ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.54$). For example, respondents were neutral that teacher consistently apply classroom policy fairly to everyone ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.6$). In addition, respondents were neutral that teachers treated students equally ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.70$).

Differences based on subgroups of gender, class, faculty, and program in the sample for academic dishonesty, no difference was found between men ($M = 2.41$) and women ($M = 2.40$) (condition; $t(129) = -0.13$, $p = 0.90$). There was also no difference found between Thai program ($M = 2.34$) and International program ($M = 2.43$), (condition; $t(37) = 0.8$, $p = 0.42$). In addition, no difference was found when comparisons were made among class [$F(1,3) = 0.62$, $p = 0.48$]. Lastly, there was no difference by faculty [$F(1,5) = 0.72$, $p = 0.61$]. Table one and two provide additional information about the ANOVA results for academic dishonesty.

For differences based on subgroups of gender, class, faculty, and program in the sample for procedural justice, no difference was found between men ($M = 3.03$) and women ($M = 3.04$) (condition; $t(131) = 0.15$, $p = 0.87$). There was also no difference found between Thai program ($M = 3.07$) and International program ($M = 2.91$) (condition; $t(50) = 1.53$, $p = 0.13$). In addition, no difference was found when comparisons were made by class [$F(1,3) = 1.64$, $p = 0.18$]. Lastly, there was also no difference by each faculty [$F(1,5) = 0.49$, $p = 0.78$]. Table three and four provide additional information about the ANOVA results for procedural justice.

Table 1. ANOVA Results Academic Dishonesty and Class

| Predictor | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>pp</i> | partial η | partial η 90% CI [LL, UL] |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 213.36 | 1 | 213.36 | 932.34 | .000 | | |
| Class | 0.43 | 3 | 0.14 | 0.62 | .604 | .01 | [.00, .04] |
| Error | 29.29 | 128 | 0.23 | | | | |

Table 2: ANOVA Results Academic Dishonesty and Faculty

| Predictor | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>pp</i> | partial η | partial η 90% CI [LL, UL] |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 115.66 | 1 | 115.66 | 486.43 | .000 | | |
| Faculty | 0.86 | 5 | 0.17 | 0.72 | .610 | .03 | [.00, .05] |
| Error | 28.30 | 119 | 0.24 | | | | |

Table 3: ANOVA Results Procedural Justice and Class

| Predictor | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | partial η | partial η 90% CI [LL, UL] |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 351.58 | 1 | 351.58 | 1210.46 | .000 | | |
| Class | 1.43 | 3 | 0.48 | 1.64 | .183 | .04 | [.00, .09] |
| Error | 37.18 | 128 | 0.29 | | | | |

Table 4 : ANOVA Results Procedural Justice and Faculty

| Predictor | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | Mean Square | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | partial η | partial η 90% CI [LL, UL] |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| (Intercept) | 164.68 | 1 | 164.68 | 554.96 | .000 | | |
| Faculty | 0.73 | 5 | 0.15 | 0.49 | .783 | .02 | [.00, .03] |
| Error | 35.31 | 119 | 0.30 | | | | |

To determine the relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice, a Pearson correlation was calculated. Result indicated that there is a weak positive correlation between academic dishonesty and procedural justice ($r = .27$, $n = 133$, 95%CI[.10, .42]).

DISCUSSION

The result of the relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice from this study has produced several important findings. First, students perceive that copying from notes in an exam/ test/ quiz or peers is something quite serious yet students rarely admit to doing this. This finding in contrast with the study in Hong Kong, from the study most

students are involved in academic misconduct in order to improve their academic performance (Kwong, Ng, Kai-Pan, & Wong, 2010). In addition, a study from Spain also found that dishonesty is common (Cladellas, Clariana, Badia, & Gotzens, 2013). This indicates that perhaps students do not want to be truthful in their responses.

Second, the study found no difference between gender, faculty, and class regarding on their perception of academic dishonesty and procedural justice. This is in contrast to several studies (D Thomas, 2014, 2017). The differences that are not present here in this study does not mean that there is no difference by gender. It only means that there is no difference in this particular sample. The reason for this may be that the majority of the participants in this study were from the social sciences which has already been found to have lower rates of academic dishonesty when compared to the hard sciences (Sendag et al., 2012).

Third, there is a weak positive relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice. This seems counter-intuitive because it indicates that as there is more transparency and equity there is also a corresponding increase in the acceptability of dishonest actions. Explaining this is difficult but it may have to do with the local context and the acceptability of situational ethics (Hamra, 2011).

Conclusion

This study has made the assumption that all the statements made by the participants are truthful. In addition, correlation does not imply causation indicating that the magnitude of the relationship is unclear until manipulation of an element is empirically test to affect the association with the dependent variable.

This study aims to find the relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice among University students. The result from the finding shows a weak positive relationship between academic dishonesty and procedural justice. Moreover, the study shows the perceptions of students toward academic dishonesty and procedural justice in classroom so that by knowing these facts would help the school implementing or promoting or educate the students on academic honesty and help the teacher to see the perception of students regarding on the justice in classroom.

Recommendation

Recommendation for Application

The findings lead to several recommendations. First, the perception of academic seriousness of 'offense' on copying their friends' assignment or doing homework for peers are not very serious. Therefore, teacher should encourage students to stop the behavior of copying

homework because if students did not study for themselves, they tend to have higher chance to be involved in cheating in the exam/quiz/test and other questionable practices (Xueqin, 2010).

It is also critical that teachers provide a transparent learning environment in which risks are encouraged in order to strengthen students understanding of concepts (Ingram, 2017). With passive learning being such a strong influence in Thailand clear expectations for action can help to alleviate this and encourage intellectual stimulation among the students (Santichai & Thomas, 2018)

Recommendation for further study

The study was conducted only in one institution and has limited among international students and among Thai students who are enrolled in English major. Therefore, the result cannot generalize beyond similar context. Expanding this study through including additional students through sequential sampling to determine the validity of the results.

Academic dishonesty has also been found among lecturers. Therefore, it would be beneficial to determine if there is an association between procedural justice and academic dishonesty among faculty. Often, faculty has a position of authority over students and their perceptions of justice and dishonesty in contrast with students would provide additional insight into this phenomenon.

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